

# Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 19th February, 2014.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Eileen Johnson(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mick Womphrey

**Officers:** Judith Trainer, Jenna McDonald(LDS)  
Kate Fulton(Business Support)

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:**

## **1 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

## **3 Minutes for Signature - 16th October 2013**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2013 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

AGREED that the minutes were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **4 Draft Minutes - 27th November 2013**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2013.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

## **5 Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty**

The Select Committee reviewed a summary of the evidence that had been presented to the Committee throughout the review. The review had sought to understand the impact of child poverty on a child's health and education and make recommendations on local action to help prevent and mitigate against this.

The Committee had taken evidence in relation to :

- Definitions and measurement of child poverty
- Poverty Rates and Trends
- Stockton Child Poverty Statistics
- Causes of Poverty
- Income Maximisation and Benefit Take Up
- Health Inequalities
- Council and Public Health Services and Support

- Voluntary and Community Sector Support
- Raising Achievement of Disadvantaged Pupils through the Pupil Premium
- Stockton Council's Strategic Framework
- Consultation Feedback

The Committee were also advised that most recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) "Monitoring Poverty and Social Inclusion 2013" provides the following key statistics:

- 13 million people were in poverty in 2011/12
- Average incomes fell by 8% between 2008 and 2012. Incomes at the bottom had fallen further still and for longer
- The fall in medium incomes lowered the estimate of the number of people in relative poverty
- The deterioration in average incomes meant that fewer children were in relative poverty but more were in absolute poverty
- 2 million families were no longer exempt from paying Council Tax
- Almost 5 million people were paid less than the living wage in 2012
- 1.4 million people were in part time work but could not find a full time job
- Prices of food had risen faster than the rate of inflation over the last decade but utility bills had risen more quickly. Food banks, providing free food to people on low incomes get almost half of their referrals due to changes of faults in the benefit system
- For the first time on record, the majority of people in poverty were in working families. Two thirds of adults in these families were families in work
- While scattered across the country, child poverty was clearly concentrated in urban areas (of all sizes)
- Children were much less likely to go without everyday items for reasons of cost. Essentially, parents prioritised their children's needs above their own

In relation to issues raised at the last meeting of the Committee regarding school meals debt across the Borough, the Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee that the Council's Catering Service was introducing a new procedure from April 2014 to help prevent schools meals debt arising. The Committee welcomed this approach but felt that it was important that when these situations arose that parents were also signposted to other help and support.

The Committee formulated draft recommendations which sought to reduce the prevalence of child poverty through income maximisation and re-prioritisation on prevention and early intervention as well as reducing the impact of poverty on a child's health and education.

AGREED that the final report be considered at the Committee's next meeting for submission to Cabinet on 24 April 2014.

## **6 Topics for Next Year's Work Programme**

Members suggested that a review on the effects of Arts, Leisure & Culture on wellbeing would be a worthwhile topic and asked that this be included in the list of topics being considered by Scrutiny Liaison Forum for inclusion in next years

scrutiny work programme.

## **7 Work Programme**

Members heard that the next Committee meeting would be held on 22nd March 2014 to agree the final report for submission to Cabinet on 24th April 2014.